



## purple loosestrife

*Lythrum salicaria*

Kingdom: Plantae  
Division/Phylum: Anthophyta - flowering plants

### Features

Purple loosestrife is a stout, perennial herb. Its green to purple stems grow three to seven feet tall. The linear shaped, smooth edged, hairy leaves may be arranged alternately on the stem or bunched in whorls. The flowers are crowded on a spike which may grow a foot long. Flowers are purple to magenta (one-half to three-fourth inch across) with five or six petals.

### Natural History

Purple loosestrife grows in moist banks of wetlands, shallow or deep marshes, river banks, and roadsides. It flowers from July through September. Honey producers often plant purple loosestrife as a "bee plant." Purple loosestrife, a native of Europe, has become a very aggressive invader of wetlands, eventually choking out many native plants. It was recommended by Dioscorides in the first century for stopping the flow of blood, as an astringent, and a treatment for dysentery.

### Habitats

Mississippi River; Missouri River; constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; interior rivers and streams; wet prairies and fens

### Iowa Status

common; exotic

### Iowa Range

statewide

### Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.  
*Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.